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6 July 1981

MEMORANDUM FOR: Chief, East Asia Division

SUBJECT : American POW's in LAOS?

1. Page 2 (my number in red ink) of the copy of the attached letter makes reference to American prisoners of war sighted in Laos. Hopefully the information will have been checked out in the field by now; but in the event that it hasn't, I thought it might be of interest to EA.

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2. The letter was given to me last Friday (3 July 1981) by my neighbor [redacted] a Special Assistant to an Assistant Secretary in the Navy Department. The letter had been written to [redacted] mother, [redacted] by her brother [redacted] -who apparently has spent many years in SEA.

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3. [redacted] told me to use the letter as I saw fit. He thought it might be of interest to this Agency. [redacted] knows me as an overt employee of CIA.)

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CIA History Staff
316 Ames Bldg. [redacted]

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Attachment:
as stated

DPMO review completed.

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English Language & Cultural Orientation Program

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May 23, 1981

Dear Hazel and Bud,

Finally, the rainy season has begun in Thailand, after six months of dry and dusty heat. We entered this heat in October, me as a Program Manager at the Hmoung refugee camp in the northeast of Thailand, Mary as an administrative assistant, and the kids swimming in the Mekong just across the river from Laos. We rented a large house along the river in a small, sleepy town, Chiengkhan, and before long everyone in the town knew all our comings and goings, all our business, what we paid for this and that in the shops and when we went here and there. It was a no privacy town! Working with the Hmoung was an enjoyable time, although being preliterate made our tasks Herculean. The Hmoung never had a written language until most recently, and that was put together by French missionaries. Around about the end of the year we were told to expect to move to another camp near the Gulf of Thailand, and so this is where we now are and I now have a program for Khmer refugees preparing for resettlement to third countries. The Khmer are easy to work with and many already speak French and some English.

The environment here is a bit better, larger and cleaner town to live in, wonderful fruit, and excellent seafood. Still, it does not have the beauty of the northeast with its beautiful Mekong River, hills and mountains and probably the world's best sunsets. (Some nights the bad guys across the river would fire a few rockets or automatic small arms to remind us that they are still around.)

Well, the USG decided to move us here and we moved our



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program down east over a three month period. I was the last one out of the camp at Ban Vinai. When I was saying goodbye to the Hmoung leadership in the camp, some of which I remembered from our earlier days in Laos, a Hmoung friend passed a letter to me which, when I finally got around to reading it, described a group of Americans they had seen on their regular sorties into northern Laos, in consort with the Thai military, and I should think the U.S. The letter even ~~even~~ included the length of the ankle chains they were wearing. I was not that surprised since Embassy people were talking about such sightings for some time, so I asked the guy to put it in writing, in Lao, and send it to me. Anyway, to make things short, I went off to our new U.N.H.C.R. location only to be surprised these last few days about an American-backed combat team of other nationalities on the ground in Laos to check things out. We don't get much news here, and I would be interested any newspaper articles you may have seen about American prisoners still in Laos, particularly so because the location given to me was quite different from the locations in Thailand's newspapers.

Anyway, here we are settling into a new house, new routines, and two weeks of vacation coming up, our first in the six months we've been here. We'll spend the first week on an island in the Gulf of Thailand, then the second week put the kids in summer school in ~~Th~~ Bangkok and Mary and I will go out and eat in the best western restaurants in Bangkok, probably find a good piano bar, without kids! They'll be six weeks in school, and after that we may decide to return to the states. My contract ends in October and we will certainly return by then. My hope is that I can get out of management and into training and program design work, probably in Kenya if that program finally gets off the ground.

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Things have really worked out well for us here. The ? had been, naturally, the children. They turned out to be superb. No problem with Thai food, Thai ways, and that is remarkable. Sheri has a real good use of the Thai language, as does Mary. Michael isn't speaking Thai yet, but he listens to enough to offer ~~xxxxxx~~ translations to us in English regularly, perhaps too! regular translations.

Sheri, my 11 year old daughter turning 27, is now teaching cultural orientation in the camp here to the children of refugees. Imagine, Sheri working every day on her lesson plans for her students! She spends a lot of time with the Thai teachers who, in many ways, are as young as she is. She's a ~~xxxxxxx~~ beautiful gal, very self-motivated and quite assertive in a nice way. A lot of it, of course, came from being around my graduate students in Vermont, people with many languages and experience with many cultures, nice people who still write to me from places all around the world - I've had letters today from Sri Lanka, Morocco, Kenya, and Libya, of all places. When we were in Vermont the kids mingled (?sp?) with them in the classrooms as well as at our little farm in Leyden, Massachusetts. That was a rental farm, but so much fun for everyone.

I had a letter from mom today telling me that Jimmey has bought out his partner and now owns the ~~xxxxx~~ motel on the water at the cape outright, and that Art has sold all the Ogunquit property and plans to buy a house on the water in Maine. I expect Gene and Ginny will summer at the cape, running the motel while school is in session, and winter back in Florida. Do you think so? Or have they sold their place there?

Well, as you can see from my typing and spelling, it's late and I am rather tired tonight. I hope, though, that the message is clear that we will be back in the States in October, if not a bit earlier. We will most likely go


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back on a United ~~Sta~~ Nations flight to the West Coast. Our ~~xxx~~ original plan was to Florida, then Virginia to Massachusetts and New York, upstate. But now we would rather skip Florida and visit you. I also need to talk with people in Washington, although I may not be ready for that after the trip back from Southeast Asia. Please let me know if you are not going to be there in October, we would really like to spend some time with you and Bud and Eddy and Bill. (By the way, I'm no longer Wally, I'm Walter since Vermont).

If you have a chance to talk with mom please tell her we will be back in October the latest. I haven't told any of others, simply because I have not had a chance to. And, most important in the Worcester circle, she should know first. I would like you to tell her. I wrote a long letter to Art, but no response and when Dotty writes it's related to the car I gave her when I left the states.

As I said earlier, it indeed is late in Thailand right now and I need to begin planning these upcoming vacation weeks. Say hello to everyone for us and best wishes, peace and love from all of us here in Thailand.

Our new address



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